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INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION
OF THE MEDICAL FACULTY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY,
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At the beginning of a new session it has always been the custom in this college for the members of the Faculty to select one of their number to address words of welcome to the newcomers and to those who have already embarked upon their medical career. This year my turn has come. On such occasions it is customary for the lecturer to introduce himself with an apology for his general and special unworthiness, but it is not my intention to do anything of the kind. On the contrary, I think myself peculiarly well fitted to welcome and give advice to new students. Firstly because, not being yet stricken in years, though scarcely juvenile, I fancy I can still think and act as a young man and look upon the world from the standpoint of a medical student; and, secondly, because it has been my good fortune to have spent ten years of my professional life in daily companionship with students. And indeed it would be a strange thing if I did not, during that time, learn to know how students thought, how they lived and moved and had their being. It is for these reasons that I think my advice may be of some service to those who are about to begin the work of the 57th session.

It will be part of my object to show you that, although the course of studies laid out for you is at first sight difficult, yet that the means of overcoming the difficulties and obstacles of the road are within your reach, and that to the industrious student the journey to a degree is interesting and pleasant. There are long marches it is true, and sometimes temporary stoppages (generally overcome by slight supplemental effort), but the road lies through a pleasing country, with so much that is interesting by the wayside that the traveller arrives at his destination sooner than the length of time spent in the journey would lead him to expect.

This is the problem to be solved by your faculty. How to afford the best medical education possible in the short space of four years? Our endeavour is to turn out as well educated a practitioner as we can—a practitioner I say, that is one who can practise, a man able at once to earn his own living and to make himself useful in the community. I believe we do turn out a practitioner, in the true sense of the word. The McGill graduate enters upon his career with a fair experience of general medical and special work, and so far we have no good reason to be dissatisfied with the result of our four years' work. The question arises, though, ought we to be satisfied or ought we be constantly endeavouring to effect improvements in the course?

The main difficulty in our way is the limited period of time at our disposal, but this difficulty we could overcome were it not for the attempts to regulate our teaching undertaken by the various provincial licensing bodies.

You have, I dare say, read *Æsop*, and you remember how the frogs, dissatisfied with the existing state of practice in the somewhat malarious district in which they resided, fell to grumbling, and, after considerable deliberation, demanded of Jupiter that some firm legislation should regulate the affairs of the profession. The thunderer, accordingly, sent them a log which met with contempt and disrespect. Annoyed at their conduct, he sent them a provincial board, and matters soon assumed such a condition that the frogs bitterly regretted that they had not well let alone. And so with the Canadian medical profession.

Boards were established, at the instigation of the members of the profession themselves, by the provincial governments, with the good intention of regulating admission to practice and preventing quacks and charlatans from exercising their dangerous trade. So far so good. But the boards, like Jupiter's stork, were not satisfied. They have in some provinces assumed the *rôle* of educators, and dictate to teachers what they must teach and to learners what they must learn. They have injured the profession they were intended to protect, and they have hampered and impeded the progress of the medical schools. From their mischievous interference this school suffers to an extreme degree. In particular, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario imposes upon our students certain very vexatious regulations and exacts of them pecuniary taxes, wholly out of proportion to the benefits they may ever expect to derive from becoming licentiates. It would seem that but two objects are aimed at by these regulations and impositions. Firstly, the establishment of a barrier to keep out of the field as many competitors as possible, the originators of the movement having affected an entrance before the fence was put up; and, secondly, to render it more and more inconvenient and uncomfortable for an Ontario student to seek his education out of his own province. Failure will attend both these objects, for one fittest will survive in the battle of life by the law of nature, and no legislation will ever enable those unsuited by natural abilities and defective education to take a front rank in the fight. The struggle for existence in the profession must be a fair one from the start, and those who cannot live by their own talents and energies, will seek in vain for any benefit from legislative aid.

The claim is made, on the other hand, that provincial boards exclude quacks and charlatans, and so protect the practitioner from dishonest competitors. As I write there lies before me a Montreal paper in which at a glance I see the open advertisement of three notorious charlatans. The Ontario Board is active enough as regards the honest practitioner, yet no one can say that irregular practice does not exist in that province.

The system of examining by boards for admission to practice

is, in one instance, carried to a great length and to an absurd conclusion. The Province of British Columbia has secured the existence of a board. There are some fifty practitioners in that province (I counted 51 in the copy of the register for '87), and united they form the Medical Council of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia. "Now, we have got in, let us keep the others out," seems to be their motto. If they had contented themselves with examining diplomas and rejecting those that came from indifferent colleges, then, perhaps, a useful function would be fulfilled, but, as the law stands at present, there is not one of you who, after graduating, would not become liable to punishment if he dared to give advice in British Columbia. He would be obliged to pass before the members of the Council, or such of them as may be appointed for the purpose, a satisfactory examination touching his fitness and capacity to practice as a physician or surgeon. In other words, the Provincial Board of British Columbia would have to make it its duty to see for itself whether your teachers understood what they were about when they taught you, examined you and certified on your diploma that you were a fit and proper person to practise medicine.

Lastly, a money tax is exacted. The plea can be made by such boards that the public must be protected, and it would be unsafe to allow a legally qualified practitioner from another province to exercise his calling within their borders. But no one can defend the establishment of a money barrier. The \$100 tax can have no other object than to limit competition.

If we wish the Canadian profession to gain the respect of the medical world, we must use every effort to rid ourselves of this provincial littleness, this parochial policy. Medicine is medicine everywhere, and a legally qualified Canadian practitioner ought to be able to practice in any part of his own country.

Another charge I bring against the provincial boards is, that they impede the progress of medical education by compelling teachers and students to devote an excessive proportion of their time to the giving and attending of didactic lectures.

The days have long since gone by when didactic lectures

were regarded as forming the principal part of a medical education. A century ago medical students were apprenticed to practitioners, and everything they learnt was of a strictly practical character. Jenner was apprenticed to a country surgeon near Bristol, and Sir Astley Cooper began professional life, at the age of fifteen, as an apprentice at Yarmouth. In those days the didactic lecture served a useful purpose in supplementing the strictly practical instruction which the pupil received from his master. The school system gradually replaced the apprenticeship system, and made the student, we wont say scientific, but it made him a man of books and opinions, and cultivated his memory to the neglect of his powers of observation.

A double course of lectures in all the more important branches of study was thought to be necessary, and the number of lectures in each course was fixed at one hundred. Opinions have changed, and improved methods are beginning to prevail. It was found that lectures failed to replace practical instruction. The professor has now to give way to the teacher. Students were over-lectured and under-taught. Your faculty would wish to replace a large proportion of the didactic lectures by practical laboratory work and instructive demonstrations, but the boards will not let them. They exact the pound of flesh; they must have the one hundred lectures twice told.* For my part, I see no hope of a change until such time as the affairs of our profession are controlled by more enlightened men, and I look to the time when you all shall be graduates, and I confidently hope you will have the good sense to vote with the party in favor of letting the shoemaker stick to his last, and letting the teaching be managed by the teachers. With no immediate hope of a change, we try to do our best to mitigate the evil. Accordingly, a few years ago, a system of grading the course was introduced, first in the classes in clinical medicine and clinical surgery, and the plan has been extended to other courses.

The excessive time devoted to didactic lectures is the worst

* The Ontario Board have added to the course in anatomy fifty more lectures, bringing the number of didactic lectures to the ridiculous figure of 250 !!

feature in our Canadian system of medical education. There is no country in the world where so many lectures have to be attended. When your brain is weary with much listening, your fingers cramped with note taking, your ischial tuberosities worn away from much sitting, do not entertain hard feelings against the faculty, but remember the provincial boards.

And then when all is done and you stand before the world the possessor of a degree, the boards do not leave you. You have to make up your mind where you are to exercise your talents for the public good. As matters now stand you may register your degree and practise in any part or province of the Dominion—in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, anywhere except in Ontario and British Columbia. In a few months we shall be able to announce that reciprocal relations will be established between the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Quebec and the General Medical Council of Great Britain, as a result of which a McGill degree may be registered in Great Britain. Provided with such a guarantee of professional respectability, you may practise in any part of Her Majesty's dominion except the two provinces. In all the mighty empire of Great Britain there are only two provinces where the profession has attempted to protect itself from honest competition by calling in the aid of the legislature.

That examinations are uncertain we all know, but some are much more uncertain than others, and none so uncertain as those conducted by licensing bodies. The examiners are selected from the body of the profession, and no teacher is allowed to examine in the subject in which he teaches. It would seem as if unfitness were a special qualification. The would-be examiner must have shown no special aptitude for the subject. A professor of surgery, for instance, would be qualified for the post of examiner in chemistry, but he must not examine in surgery, because he knows too much about it. A good country practitioner, with a nice comfortable circle of midwifery patients, is, on this principle, made examiner in physiology or anatomy. And what are the results? The examination is a scramble, sometimes the weak succeed while the strong succumb. "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes." Who shall examine the examiners?

I have gone to some length to show how the licensing boards impede progress. Now it shall be my effort to prove to you that, in spite of all the obstacles thrown in our way, the number of our students has steadily increased with the imposition of fresh tests and annoying regulations.

We ourselves, during the last twelve years, have instituted changes in the curriculum which have made Jordan a very much harder road to travel than it was in my time, and it really seems that the more difficult the course the more there are who wish to take it. The class of 1875-6 was the smallest in the last twenty years. It was in the spring of 1877 that the first examination in practical anatomy was held. (The students have taken a very deep interest in it ever since.) Practical chemistry followed suit, and higher marks were awarded in these two important subjects. Practical courses in microscopy, histology and pathology were established about this period. Enlargement and extension of the course has taken place in other directions. The proportion of marks qualifying for a pass was considerably raised and the tests have been increased. New subjects have been added, such as hygiene and gynecology. The whole course has been made longer by the addition of one compulsory summer session. Four complete years must be spent at college, and there are exemptions in favor of no one. But in spite of these changes, and there were not a few who thought our numbers would diminish, there has been a steadily increasing influx of students.

McGill was the first medical college on this continent to demand four complete years of study. She was the first to abolish the exemption in favour of the student who had spent his year of so-called study with a doctor, and that in favor of the bachelor of arts. And in this movement McGill is only doing what she has always done. She is leading. She did fifty years ago what some colleges are beginning to do to-day. She began her career with a matriculation examination. In the whole of the United States there is not a single college whose entrance examination is more severe than that which has always been demanded here. Very few colleges have any at all. Harvard University, which, owing

to its great reputation and the extent of its endowment, can afford to introduce costly reform, insists on a matriculation examination of which Latin forms a part. Some other colleges, with less ambitious views in the matter of preliminary education, content themselves with the three R's; and, lastly, come the unholy army of colleges who demand no examination at all, and in its rank are included many so-called first-class colleges. Matriculation examinations do not pay. They cost too much. The popular voice in the great republic is against the severity shown in demanding that one who wishes to enter a learned profession should be made to prove that he can read and write.

Students always take an interest in examinations. You know that our standard has been raised. But bear in mind that the actual amount of work is really reduced because so much more practical teaching is done and so much more personal aid afforded to each student. Moreover, the examinations have been arranged with a view to encourage practical observation and to put a limit upon what is commonly called the cramming process.

In spite of all these changes, changes which have been attempted in some colleges and which have had to be abandoned, the class at McGill has steadily increased year by year. This is a thing of which every Canadian ought to be proud, that the greater the difficulties presented the greater the number of those who seek to overcome them.

Having pointed out the path that leads to a degree, and explained how difficult a struggle it is to get into the profession by that path, I am going now to tell you how this may be accomplished. Firstly, I address myself to those who are here for the first time. These are commonly called Freshmen. A silly notion prevails that there is some kind of opprobrium attached to the title Freshman. A Freshman is a fresh man. Observe the word man. It does not mean boy. A man must put away boyish things. He must think and act as a man. He must cease to depend upon others, act for and rely upon himself. Boys may be noisy, sing loudly in the streets and behave generally as boys, but men should not do such things.

There are members of other classes in the College who would like to make you believe that *fresh* means silly, idle, presumptuous, and a host of other bad things; but it means nothing of the kind. It means vigorous, active, intelligent, energetic. Freshman! you stand to-day in a position truly enviable, you have the world before you, and opportunities for study such as your fathers never possessed. See that you use them properly. The first year is the most important period in your professional career. It must not be spent in idle amusement. Be careful, then, how you form your habits, and be especially careful of the companionship you make. Friendships with senior students are of mutual advantage. The youngster derives help and support from the senior, and the senior in teaching his younger brother improves greatly his own knowledge. I would like to see the students here follow the example of their English brethren, and spend more of their time in asking each other questions and teaching one another.

Remember, Freshmen! that having once become medical students you must sustain the character of the school, and the reputation of the school is merely the sum of the reputations of each member of the school.

Do not be over-anxious about examinations. Any person of ordinary intelligence and common industry can pass. Don't deceive yourselves. There is no luck in examinations. The student who was plucked because his luck was bad was the man who provided himself with so little knowledge that an unexpected call upon his scanty store made him a bankrupt. There are a few students whose natural capabilities are such that the intellectual life is unsuited to them, but that number is very small. I believe that there are very few who cannot pass. And above all things, do not work with the idea that your only object in coming here is to pass examinations and get a degree. You are not so many cannons and your teachers are not gunners who ram home a charge of Anatomy, another of Physiology and Chemistry, and fire you off as a salute on convocation day.

The knowledge you gain here must be the nucleus of your

life studies, and, moreover, you must regard your studies as being undertaken not with the object of merely acquiring a store of facts, but as the means of training the powers of observation. "The habit of observation is the foundation of the art of medicine." And it is upon your own observations and experiences that you will have to depend, and not upon those of other people. Other people's experiences are like other people's clothes; they may keep off the cold, but they don't fit and are very unbecoming. All through life the primary subjects must be kept at your fingers ends. It is not an exaggeration to say that nearly all the errors in diagnosis commonly met with in practice can be traced to defective knowledge of anatomy and physiology. A good physiologist or a good anatomist does not necessarily make a good physician or a good surgeon, but no man can properly practice medicine without a sound working knowledge of the primary branches.

Do not be contented with a minimum of work, just enough to enable you to scrape through the examinations. In dealing out your share of work give good measure. Make it a rule to do always more than is asked. Don't stop working the minute the clock strikes. Remember the words George Eliot puts into the mouth of Adam Bede: "I hate to see a man's arms drop down as if he was shot before the clock's fairly struck, just as if he had never a bit of pride and delight in 's work. The very grindstone 'ill go on turning a bit after you loose it."

Use your text books more, and depend more upon them. Select a good one, and stick to it. Read over the subject of the lecture you have heard that day. Cultivate a spirit of enquiry. Think out the problems set before you, and try to find out the reason for everything. Do not be satisfied with what you hear your teachers say unless you perfectly understand what they mean. We are too apt to talk above the heads of our class, and a good deal of the subject matter of the lecture or demonstration is not quite taken in and understood. Always ask if you don't understand. We all like to have students point out to us their own difficulties, and thereby give a direction to our teaching.

Try to be careful, methodical, systematic. Make sure of one step before you take another. Give all your energies to facts and observations. Never mind the theories, they can take care of themselves. Waste no time. "Time is the stuff that life is made of." It is not the student who sits up late and burns most oil who succeeds best, any more than it is the person who eats most who becomes most healthy. Try to acquire the habit of utilizing odd moments. You cannot all take a prize, but you can all make a good degree.

Gentlemen! we begin our 57th session at a period in the history of the profession of unusual activity and progress, but with us in this college a period of sadness and mourning. This is the first introductory lecture for many a long year at which our late Dean is not present. Prof. Howard was in this room a year ago to welcome the new comer, but since our last meeting we have had to mourn his death.

It seems fit that I should speak of him to-day, but more in his relation to students than in his relation to the University and to the medical profession of Canada. I wish to point out to you how you may derive benefit from the example he set you. There is probably no student beginning his studies to-day who has before him greater difficulties to face than had our late Dean when his medical career began. He was a poor man. There were no powerful friends to advance his interests; there was nothing to depend upon but his own energy, his own perseverance and his wonderful capacity for hard work. His great love for his profession, and more particularly for the scientific part of it, showed itself in every day of his active life. His devotion to clinical studies made him a marked man in this University long before she honoured herself by granting him a degree. After his entry to practice his path was beset with many difficulties. The doors of the General Hospital were slow to open to him. He did not derive from that institution the fostering help it has afforded so many men who have since become eminent in the profession. The University herself at first overlooked his talents and energies, and he was not the first of his classmates to receive a teaching appointment. He had not

been long in the school before he gained that loving respect and admiration from the students which he retained to the last day of his life. In the faculty his strong personal influence was always exerted in favour of reform and improvement. In all his relations with the students Dr. Howard showed towards them a fatherly affection and interest. Valuable as was his time, manifold his engagements, no student ever failed to gain audience with him, and with audience sympathy and good counsel. Those of you who had the benefit of attending his last course of lectures will remember, as do all his old pupils, the kindness and forbearance, and the patience with which he spent often more than his lecture hour over again in answering questions and showing the pathological specimens in which he was so much interested, to the knot of eager students gathered about him. I can only say of him as a lecturer, what Baillie said of William Hunter: "No one ever possessed more enthusiasm for his art, more persevering industry, more acuteness of investigation, more perspicuity of expression, or, indeed, a greater share of natural eloquence. He excelled very much any lecturer whom I have ever heard in the clearness of his arrangement, the aptness of his illustration, and the elegance of his diction."

Whatever may be the fortunes of this college, whatever may be the success to which it shall attain, the period during which the reins of government were held by Dr. Howard, must always be regarded as one of progress and enlightenment. The rise of the school which I have attempted to demonstrate to you, is mainly the result of his energy and labour. Though older in years than any of his colleagues, Dr. Howard was as young as the youngest in his ideas of medical practice and of medical education. Advancing years brought with them no diminished vigour nor flagging interest in the welfare of the college he so dearly loved. He was ever ready to accept new ideas and to carry out the improvements which the advance of education from time to time demanded. The late years of his useful life were mainly devoted to the advancement of projects directly affecting the welfare of the Canadian medical student, the establishment of the Campbell Endowment Fund, and the organi-

zation of the Royal Victoria Hospital. By means of the revenue derived from the former we were enabled to build, equip and carry on the magnificent laboratories in which you will learn in a practical manner the rudiments of your profession. In a few years too, the student will study disease in a hospital which will reflect credit on the noble benefactors and on the country in which they live. For these great benefits the student is indebted firstly to the generosity of the benefactors, but such gifts were largely the outcome of the life work and energies of our late Dean.

The new session we begin in sorrow, but our sorrow must not weaken our efforts. Let the death of our leader stimulate us to unwonted energy. *Let us do what we would like him to see us doing.* Let us prove ourselves worthy pupils of Howard, and show the world that we can at least attempt to imitate the virtues of his character. Let us be as zealous, as honest, as upright, as conscientious as that noble example of all that constitutes the gentleman and the Christian who has been so recently taken from us.